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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND DRL  
PARIS AND LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CAMEROON POLICE SUSPENDED FOR KIDNAPPING OF EQUATO-GUINEAN

REFUGEE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Cameroon has reacted with shock to reports that Cameroonian police officials collaborated with security officials from the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (GREG) to kidnap a Equatoguinean convicted in absentia and seeking refugee status in Cameroon. The two police officials involved have been publicly rebuked, with promises of further sanctions, and the Government of Cameroon (GRC) has taken the rare step of publicizing its demarche to the GREG. The last few months have witnessed occasional signs of friction between Cameroon and its nouveau riche neighbor, so we will watch closely to see how this incident is handled. End summary.

¶2. (U) Cipriano Nguema Mba, an Equatoguinean national seeking refugee status with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and GRC has been missing since October 7, when he was allegedly abducted by two members of Cameroon's national police, Ibrahim Ndam and Amadou Ndam, and handed over to the Equatoguinean Embassy in Yaounde. According to press reports in Cameroon, Nguema Mba was convicted in absentia by Equatoguinean courts for embezzling from the GREG Ministry of Defense and for his role in an abortive 2004 coup attempt.

¶3. (U) Cameroon's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) issued an October 20 press statement acknowledging that "on October 7, a Equatoguinean citizen enjoying refugee status [sic] in Cameroon was exfiltrated out of Cameroon by the Equatoguinean Embassy in Yaounde with the complicity of two officers of the Cameroonian national police" and that the GRC had formally asked the GREG to "shed light on the apparent disappearance which, if confirmed, would be a flagrant violation of diplomatic norms."

¶4. (U) In two October 17 administrative statements published in the government-owned Cameroon Tribune newspaper, Edgard Alain Mebe Ngo'o announced that the two implicated police officers have been suspended without pay for three months for "irregular arrest of a refugee on October 8." The October 20 MINREX press statement indicated that the two would be subject to further charges for their apparent collusion with "the intelligence services" of a foreign state.

¶5. (SBU) Emboffs spoke October 21 with Saidou Batina, a Captain in the Gendarmerie, which had provided protection to Nguema Mba soon after his arrival in Cameroon. Having investigated allegations (subsequently disproven) that a gendarme colluded with the Ndams, Batina claimed some firsthand knowledge of the case. According to Batina, the Ndams (who belonged to the same ethnic group as Nguema Mba's girlfriend) claimed that they handed Nguema Mba to the GREG Embassy because they believed he was a car thief, a story Batina dismissed as not credible. Batina said that Nguema Mba initially fled EG for Cameroon, where he stayed for at least six months before travelling to Spain. Batina said Nguema Mba returned to Cameroon about four months ago, for reasons unknown to Batina.

¶6. (SBU) Poloff spoke to an official with the Cameroon office of

the UNHCR, who confirmed that Nguema Mba had applied for refugee status, but clarified that his case had been refused and was currently under appeal. According to the UNHCR official, Nguema Mba was still entitled to legal protection afforded refugees because his case had not been definitively refused. UNHCR has demarched the GRC and briefed Geneva on the case and said it has no indication that GRC officials were aware of the plot.

17. (SBU) Comment: The GRC has reacted with unusual speed and publicity to this incident. The fact that the GRC decided to publicly punish two police officers and admonish (however diplomatically) the GREG suggests that Cameroonian officials are genuinely shocked that such a brazen crime would happen in Cameroon, and with the collusion of GRC officials. The last few months have witnessed occasional signs of friction between Cameroon and its nouveau riche neighbor, so we will watch closely to see how this incident is handled. End comment.

GARVEY.